

the past is gone (but something might be found to take its place) by zach_stone

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Summary:

Richie continues laughing, and then he tips sideways to bump his shoulder against Eddie's. "Aw, Eds. You're just the same as always."

Eddie bumps him back. "Did you think I'd be different?"

"I don't know. College changes people," Richie says.

"I guess," Eddie says. "Not that much though. Not me, anyway."

"Well, I'm glad," Richie says. "I missed you."

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Or, it's 1996 and Eddie's home from college for winter break. He grapples with thoughts of saying goodbye to Derry for good, his feelings for Richie, and a confession in the form of a mixtape.

the past is gone (but something might be found to take its place)

Author's Note:

i was talking on twitter the other day about richie and eddie making each other mixtapes and then i was inspired to not only make said mixtapes, but to write a fic centered around them. i am aware this isn't exactly a new or original concept, but music is very important to me and anytime i can find an excuse to weave it into a fic, i'm gonna do it.

this fic exists in a timeline where the losers defeated pennywise in 1989, and nobody moved away until college.

title from hey jealousy by gin blossoms

The blue glow of the television washes over the couch, where Eddie sits as close to one arm as possible, his feet planted firmly on the floor. On the other end of the couch, his mother sits with her eyes focused straight ahead at the soap opera on TV. They haven't spoken in what feels like at least two hours. Eddie's certainly not about to break the silence, but his skin itches with the palpable tension that's been lingering since he got home for winter break last night. It gets worse every year, every break — *just one more year*, he tells himself, staring at the TV and letting the images blur into shapeless colors on the screen. Next year is his last in college, and it'll be his last winter break obligated to go back home, and then — well, then hopefully he'll graduate and get a job and never have to return to Derry again.

As it is, Eddie's not sure how he's going to get through a whole *month* of this, with his mom. He knows his friends are coming back to town at some point during the break too, but everyone's been so busy, and every year they write and call each other a little less. He doesn't even know when everyone's getting back.

Eddie shifts on the couch. He wants to pull his feet up and tuck them under himself, but he refuses to get comfortable. He feels like he has to be on guard, ready for anything, for the moment the silent treatment breaks and he has to make a hasty escape to his room.

Then, abruptly, there's a knock on the front door. His mother glances over toward it, frowning, but before she can say anything, Eddie says quickly, "I'll get it!" and bounds off the couch to answer it. He only opens the door enough to peek his head out and see who's standing on his front step.

"Why, Ah say, if it isn't li'l ol' Eddie Kaspbrak," Richie says in his Southern Belle Voice. He's got his hands shoved in the pockets of his winter coat, a beanie over his messy curls. He looks different than the last time Eddie saw him, which was more than a year ago at this point — he's still unfairly tall, but less gangly and more broad-shouldered now, and his hair is longer than Eddie remembers. His glasses are different, but still thick-rimmed and magnified, and the lazy smirk on his face is familiar as ever.

Eddie's heart leaps into his throat at the sight of him, and he grins before he remembers he's supposed to pretend to be exasperated by Richie's Voices. It's worth it, though, for the way Richie's smile shifts into something more earnest, his eyes bright and delighted.

"Hey, Eds," he says, in his regular voice. God, Eddie's missed him.

"Hi, Rich." Eddie glances behind him, and sees his mother pretending to watch TV again while really side-eyeing Eddie at the door. "Gimme two minutes, hang on." He shuts the door again and grabs his coat from the closet, shoves his feet into his boots, and pulls his scarf out of the pocket of his coat, winding it around his neck as he calls over his shoulder, "I'll just be on the porch, Ma!" Then he slips out the door again, nearly bumping his chest into Richie's in the process.

"Easy there, pardner," Richie says, putting his hands on Eddie's shoulders to steady him. "Where's the fire?"

Eddie huffs out a laugh. "I've been watching soaps with her for like, a hundred years in dead silence. I was about to go fucking nuts." He

shakes his head, and then looks up at Richie's familiar face. Something in him unclenches, and he reaches up to grip Richie's arms loosely. "Hi."

"Hiya," Richie says. He pulls Eddie in for a quick but tight hug, squeezing him and rocking him side-to-side for a moment before letting him go. "When did you get back in town?"

"Last night," Eddie says. "You?"

"A couple hours ago," Richie says. "I just couldn't wait to stop by and visit my one true love." He waggles his eyebrows. "But if Mrs. K's busy I guess you'll do."

Eddie groans, shoving him. "Why did I think you'd stop making mom jokes, why did I even get my hopes up?"

Richie snickers. "You should know better than that by now, Eds."

Eddie sits down on the porch step, and Richie drops down to join him, his legs folding up absurdly. Eddie swears he's somehow gotten even taller than the last time they saw each other. He hugs his knees to his chest, resting his chin on his folded arms, and tilts his head to look at Richie. "I wasn't sure if you were gonna come home this year."

Richie shrugs. "Got nothing better to do."

"You haven't been back in a while," Eddie says. "You didn't come back the last two winter breaks. Or last summer. I haven't seen you since summer after freshman year."

"I've been busy," Richie says, a little defensively. "I was working over break, I'm trying to save up for a car."

"Oh, right." Eddie remembers, in one of Richie's letters to him at the start of last summer, he'd mentioned getting a job at a restaurant. "How's that going?"

Richie grins sheepishly. "I got fired. I *may* have started a small fire in the kitchen."

Eddie gapes at him. “You *what*? I thought you were a waiter, how did you even — did you do it on purpose?”

“No!” Richie laughs. “But I should start saying I did, that sounds cooler.”

“Arson is not *cool*, Richie!” Eddie exclaims, smacking him on the arm.

Richie continues laughing, and then he tips sideways to bump his shoulder against Eddie’s. “Aw, Eds. You’re just the same as always.”

Eddie bumps him back. “Did you think I’d be different?”

“I don’t know. College changes people,” Richie says.

“I guess,” Eddie says. “Not that much though. Not me, anyway.”

“Well, I’m glad,” Richie says. “I missed you.”

Eddie’s cheeks get warm, and he hopes he can blame the cold for how pink his face is getting. “Yeah, I missed you too, stupid.” He picks at a loose thread in his jeans. “Have you heard from anyone else, when they’re getting here?”

Richie hums. “I talked to Bill on the phone a couple weeks ago, I think he said he’s not getting into town until like, three days before Christmas. And I know Stan and Bev’s breaks don’t start until next week. Not sure about Ben or Mike.” He smiles at Eddie. “Looks like it’s just you and me for now, short stuff.”

“Watch it, big guy,” Eddie says. He means for it to come out jokingly, but after he’s said it he thinks maybe that’s a weird thing to say. Richie looks away, visibly blushing, and Eddie bites down hard on his own tongue.

This is the problem with being away from Richie for so long. When they were kids and spent every waking moment together, the feelings Eddie had for Richie became something like background noise, a constant thrum he could safely ignore. But seeing him so infrequently, it’s like it barrels Eddie over every single time. Being around Richie makes him say and do stupid shit, because *Richie*

always says and does stupid shit. And despite anything he might outwardly say to the contrary, Eddie knows he's forever going to be swept up in Richie's energy whenever he's around. He can't help himself.

Case in point: after this awkward exchange leads to a few beats of equally awkward silence, Eddie blurts out, "I have something for you."

Richie raises his eyebrows. "What, a Christmas present? It's a little early, Eds."

"No, no, this is — it was supposed to be a late birthday present, but then you didn't come home for summer break, so I guess now it's a *really* late birthday present." Eddie frowns. "Or, an early birthday present for next year?"

Richie snorts. "Sure, whatever you say, Eds. What is it?"

"Stay right there." Eddie gets to his feet and slips back into the house. His mother is still watching TV, and she doesn't look up when he comes back inside. He darts up the stairs and into his bedroom, and then rifles through his suitcase until he finds the cassette.

He made it at the end of last spring semester, agonizing over the track order and song selection. Richie used to make him mixtapes all the time growing up — insisting he was going to introduce Eddie to "real music," since his mother was unsurprisingly strict about what could be played in the house. She thought *jazz* was too adventurous. Eddie had spent many a night with his walkman hidden under the covers with him, listening to Richie's mixtapes and wondering what it meant when he included a song like "I Want You to Want Me" but *also* included "My Sharona." Richie always insisted the songs were chosen randomly, but — well, Eddie wondered.

This mixtape Eddie's made, on the other hand, is anything *but* random. He thinks there's a pretty glaringly obvious message in his song choices, and he'd felt both terrified and exhilarated when he finished it back in April. Now, many months later, he still has the track list memorized, and he weighs it in his hand for a moment.

He runs his thumb over the little rainbow stripe on the tape's label, where he's written *For Richie*. Maybe a bit melodramatically, he thinks that giving this to Richie will be like exposing a little bit of his soul. He closes his fingers around the tape and nods to himself. If there's anyone he thinks he can trust with something like that, it's Richie.

Eddie hurries back down the stairs and out the door, where Richie is still sitting on the step, drumming mindlessly on his knees and staring off into the distance. He turns when Eddie drops down next to him again, smiling expectantly.

"Here," Eddie says, thrusting the tape at him. "Happy birthday."

Richie's eyes widen in surprise. "You made me a mixtape?" he says, turning it over in his hands.

"Figured it was about time," Eddie says. "You made me like, a million."

Richie laughs, looking embarrassed for some reason. "Yeah, I — I sure did, huh."

"It's got some stuff you introduced me to," Eddie says, tapping his pointer finger on the tape's label. "And then, you know, some stuff I found on my own."

"Rad," Richie says. He's looking at the cassette like it's the most precious gift he's ever been given. "Thanks, Eds. Hey, can we listen to it?"

Eddie wasn't expecting that. "Um, I don't think my mom will want you in the house, no offense."

Richie puts a hand to his chest, feigning hurt. "How dare you say that, I'm in her bed every night." When Eddie rams an elbow into his ribs, Richie just laughs easily. "No, I meant maybe we could listen to it in the car?" He points, and Eddie sees Wentworth Tozier's hatchback parked on the curb. "I borrowed my dad's. We could just drive around, play your tape?"

The thing is, Eddie wasn't planning to be *with* Richie when he

listened to it. But if he says that now, it'll only make things more obvious, and despite Eddie's intentions with the tape, he doesn't want to give himself away just yet. So, schooling his expression, he shrugs and says, "Yeah, sure."

They get to their feet, and Eddie pulls open the front door to lean in and call, "I'm going out for a little bit, Ma!" before grabbing Richie by the arm and dragging him to the car, half-paranoid that his mother's going to chase him down the stairs and try to stop him. She doesn't, of course. When they get in the car, Richie's giving him an amused smirk.

"Loosen up, Spaghetti," he says, sticking the key in the ignition and starting the engine. "The night is young, and we're going *cruising*."

"Alright, dipshit, just put in the tape," Eddie says, rolling his eyes. He watches as Richie sticks the tape in the deck and listens to it whirl for a moment before the guitar intro to "Hey Jealousy" starts playing.

Richie nods appreciatively. "Gin Blossoms? Nice one, Eds. Off to a solid start."

As they drive, Richie bobbing his head to the music, Eddie stares out the window as the neighborhood gives way to the main road. Nothing's changed since he was a kid — it's always felt like Derry was frozen in time. There are tiny differences, but it's more of an energy than anything else. Ever since that summer when they were thirteen, when they killed the fucking clown, things have felt a little lighter with each passing year. But it's still *Derry*, after all. Some things run deep, engraved in the bones of the town, and it makes Eddie shudder.

He thinks again about leaving, about how in a little more than a year he could be saying goodbye Derry for the last time. He wonders what Richie's plans are. Will they even see each other again, if they don't come back here? What if, at the end of the day, Derry is all they have anymore? The thought puts a lump in Eddie's throat.

He cuts his eyes over to Richie, who's singing along to the Springsteen song that's playing now. His beanie sits crookedly over his hair, and a single curl is resting in the middle of his forehead.

Back before Eddie understood what his feelings for Richie were, he used to think that sometimes it just *hurt* to look at him, but he never wanted to look away.

Richie seems to notice Eddie's gaze, because he glances over at him for a moment. "You okay?" he asks.

Eddie nods, embarrassed. He points out the window at the diner as they pass it. "You wanna get something to eat?"

The diner was a frequent haunt of Eddie and Richie's when they were in high school. They'd find a corner booth and split an order of fries while yammering on about whatever comic book they were currently reading, throwing fries at each other and generally causing a ruckus until one of the harried-looking waitresses asked them to get out.

This time, they order hot chocolates along with their fries, and the booth is just as sticky and grimy as Eddie remembers. He wrinkles his nose and wipes uselessly at it with a napkin before giving up.

"So how's school?" he asks Richie, once they get their order.

Richie pauses with a fry halfway to his mouth. "'S fine," he says, shrugging and taking a bite. "Nothing to write home about."

"Clearly," Eddie says without meaning to. Richie hasn't written him a letter (besides a brief birthday card in November) since August. But it's not like Eddie's been any better about staying in touch. He's not even sure why he's bringing it up.

Richie winces. He shovels a few more fries into his mouth, clearly stalling for time. Finally, he says, "I didn't — I mean, I haven't been writing anyone very often anymore, I just get busy, you know."

"I know," Eddie says quickly. "Me too, obviously."

"I can't wait to graduate," Richie says, sighing wistfully. He sprawls along his side of the booth, arms stretched out and legs bumping against Eddie's under the table. "I feel like that's when real life finally starts, you know?"

Eddie looks at Richie's face, where he can still see the earnest,

loudmouthed kid he fell in love with when he was nine, never shutting up about how he was going to *make it big* someday. He's still there, underneath the shadow of stubble on Richie's jaw, the tired circles under his eyes that have no business being there when Richie's still so young. "Yeah," Eddie says, quieter than he means to.

Richie taps his foot against Eddie's. Eddie taps him back, and Richie grins. "You playin' footsie, Kaspbrak?"

"You tell me," Eddie says, and kicks Richie hard in the shin.

Richie half-groans, half-laughs, jerking his leg away from Eddie's side of the table. "Ow, okay, definitely not, Jesus. I think that's gonna leave a bruise." He shakes his head ruefully. "Why are you such a violent little man?"

"I blame you," Eddie says dispassionately. Richie grins.

"One of these days, Eddie, you're gonna realize you can't blame me for all your problems."

"We'll see about that," Eddie mutters.

They finish their hot chocolate and fries, and when they get back into the car Richie turns to him and says, "Hey, you know what would really make this night better? Alcohol."

"How unfortunate that you can't get into a bar yet, you big baby," Eddie says, smirking.

Richie shoves him lightly. "Maybe not, but I *do* happen to know someone who just recently turned twenty-one, who could purchase us alcohol which we could *then* drink by the quarry." He pouts, giving Eddie some unfortunately very compelling puppy-dog eyes.

Eddie sighs. "You're only friends with me because I can buy you booze," he says.

Richie cackles, starting the car again and pulling away from the diner. Joni Mitchell is crooning from the mixtape. "I always did like an older man," Richie jokes. Their eyes meet for a second, and then they both look quickly away.

“Do you wanna dance with me, baby? Do you wanna take a chance on maybe finding some sweet romance with me, baby?” Joni Mitchell sings. Eddie clears his throat.

Richie does end up goading Eddie into buying a six pack of beer from the convenience store, and they head down toward the quarry. They can’t actually drive all the way to the water, so they park as far in as they can get. It’s secluded; no one will bother them here.

When they’d come here as kids, Eddie remembers the trek down to the quarry being long and dense with trees and brush — how many games of pirates and explorers had they played, tromping through to the cliff’s edge? It doesn’t seem nearly as enormous now as it had back then.

Richie’s turned off the music for the moment, and he’s twisting off the lid of a beer for Eddie before opening one for himself. He lifts it up, tipping the neck in Eddie’s direction. “Cheers, Eds. To your mother.”

“Kiss my ass, Richie,” Eddie says, clinking their bottles together.

Richie plows through three bottles and seems perfectly fine, while Eddie starts to feel fuzzy and tipsy before he’s finished his second. “What th’ fuck,” he mutters, squinting at the bottle like it’s betrayed him somehow. He doesn’t drink very much these days, but senior year of high school he and the Losers would get stupid drunk at least once a month, usually hiding out in Mike’s grandpa’s barn. He was a lightweight back then, at seventeen, but he thought *maybe* he’d gotten a bit better tolerance by now. Apparently not.

Richie looks at him from the driver’s seat, deeply amused. “You’re drunk, man.”

“I’m not *drunk*,” Eddie insists. “*You’re* not drunk and you’ve had more than me.”

“Yeah, but you’re tiny,” Richie says. “I don’t get drunk that fast, I’ve got more body mass.” He pats his own chest, and Eddie takes another moment to appreciate how broad Richie’s gotten. It makes his palms sweat.

They've been talking somewhat mindlessly, Richie sharing absurd stories from his job at the restaurant while Eddie talks shit about the other business majors in his classes, and it feels — comfortable. It's always easy to fall back into this rhythm with Richie, and Eddie almost hates that it is, because he knows how hard it'll be to leave him again in January.

Richie leans forward to turn the music back on. The songs have gotten progressively more obvious — Eddie thinks the lyric *"to die by your side would be a heavenly way to die"* was a bit on the nose, considering their actual middle school near-death experience — but when the opening notes of "Landslide" start playing, Eddie squeezes his eyes shut and wonders why his past self had to be quite so dramatic.

Richie makes a soft sound, something like, "oh," and then he leans back in his seat and doesn't say anything else. The music fills the car and overpowers the humming of alcohol in Eddie's skull. The question rings in his head again and again, of what will happen when he graduates. If he'll ever see Richie again.

The song clicks over to the last one on the tape — "Friday I'm in Love." They're both still quiet, letting the song fill all the space between them. Richie is picking at the label on his beer bottle. Eddie stares down at the last dregs of amber liquid in his own and feels adrenaline buzz away whatever tipsiness is left in his system. When this song ends, something is going to happen, one way or another.

When it does, the quiet in the car feels very loud. Eddie's hands are sweaty where they wrap around his beer bottle.

"That was a good mix, Eds," Richie says quietly. Eddie nods, not trusting himself yet to speak. "Very, uh, cohesive theme. Learned from the best, I see."

Eddie snorts, still not looking at him. "Your mixtapes were not cohesive," he says. "You always threw in some weird fucking song in the middle."

"Yeah, well. I thought if I didn't, I'd be too... obvious." Richie must notice the way Eddie cringes at that, because he hurriedly adds, "Not

that there's anything wrong with obvious! I... I like obvious."

Eddie finally looks at him, because there's something hopeful in his tone. Richie is gazing at him with blatant longing, and when Eddie lifts his head he sees the way Richie's eyes drop to his mouth. Richie starts to lean in across the gearshift, and Eddie's breath catches. He starts to lean forward, too, and then blurts out in a sudden, desperate panic, "What are you gonna do once you graduate?"

Richie freezes. He blinks a couple times. "Uh, I don't know, start trying to get gigs in LA, I guess."

Eddie nods, feeling something like hysteria bubbling up in him. "Are you ever going to come back here? To Derry?"

Richie sits back down fully in his seat and looks off to the side for a moment, frowning. Then he says, "Probably not. *Hopefully* not."

"Right. Me neither. So what if — what if we never see each other again after that? I mean, fuck, Richie, we barely talk anymore, we only see each other when we come home, what happens when this isn't home anymore? I'm never — and I —" He cuts himself off, scrubbing his hands over his face. This wasn't part of his plan, none of this is going the way he intended it to go when Richie listened to the tape and figured out the truth of Eddie's feelings. He uncovers his face and says weakly, "I'm sorry, I'm being crazy, never mind. Were you about to kiss me? You can still do that if you want."

Richie huffs out a disbelieving laugh. He shakes his head a little. "Eddie..." He pauses, sucking in a deep breath. "I miss you all the time, you know that? I miss you so fucking much." He laughs again, but there's no humor in it. "And I thought if we didn't talk as much, I don't know, it'd be easier? It'd hurt less? But every time I see you, I'm like, *fuck*, why did I think it'd be easier? I like you so much that it scares the shit out of me. I didn't know what to do about it."

"Yeah," Eddie says hoarsely. "Yeah, I... me too. That's pretty much been my thought process."

"Oh good, so we're both idiots," Richie says.

Eddie smiles despite himself. “Well that’s nothing new.”

Richie reaches across the small distance between them, taking the end of Eddie’s scarf between his fingers and tugging lightly. “C’mere,” he murmurs.

Eddie goes willingly, closing his eyes as he leans in, and he hears Richie’s nervous intake of breath before their lips meet, and then they’re kissing. Eddie’s hands move of their own accord, pushing up into Richie’s hair and knocking his beanie off his head so Eddie can tangle his fingers in Richie’s curls. Richie’s hand slips into the open front of Eddie’s coat, pressing his palm against Eddie’s chest.

Richie opens his mouth, and Eddie follows suit, and the kiss deepens. He’s never kissed anyone like this — has barely kissed anyone, period, and never a guy. His heart is pounding under Richie’s hand, and Richie is making quiet, whimpery sounds. Eddie sighs against him, losing himself to the wet heat of Richie’s mouth, the vaguely unpleasant aftertaste of beer on both of their tongues, the warmth of Richie’s breath when he pulls away only to trail his lips along Eddie’s cheek, up to his ear.

“Have you,” Eddie starts, panting, his thumb tracing the shell of Richie’s ear and making him shiver, “have you done this before?” Making out in a car, he means, or kissing at all, or — or being this vulnerable, cracked open before another person.

Richie laughs, and Eddie feels it ghost across his cheek before Richie bites another kiss to the sensitive skin behind his ear. “No,” he says. “Who would I even do this with?”

“I don’t know, anyone,” Eddie says.

“Right, because *anyone* wants to get with this,” Richie snorts. He’s still so close, both of them leaning awkwardly over the gearshift, and Eddie can feel him speak as much as he can hear it.

He frowns, tilting his head to meet Richie’s gaze. “Why are you saying it like that, like you’re some kind of caveman? Do you not know you’re attractive?”

Richie goes very red. It's kind of incredible. His cheeks are all splotchy and flushed, his hair is a completely fucked-up mess from wearing a hat all day and now from Eddie's hands, and his glasses are a little fogged up. It makes heat pool low in Eddie's stomach.

"You're so dumb," he says, tracing Richie's jaw with his fingers. "So hot and so, so dumb."

"Dude, shut up," Richie says, clearly flustered. He kisses Eddie again, slow and sweet. "I can't believe *you're* saying this to me, you're like — have you looked in a mirror?" He can't seem to stop kissing him, holding Eddie's face in his hands and pressing his lips to Eddie's cheek, the bridge of his nose, the corners of his mouth. "God, I wanna kiss you forever. Fuck, Eddie."

Eddie smiles, closing his eyes and scratching his fingers through the hair at the nape of Richie's neck. He feels warm and fizzy inside, like a sparkler. "Fine by me," he says.

And they do, for an indeterminate amount of time. In the back of his mind, Eddie wonders if his mother is starting to fret about him being gone for so long. It's not very late, barely eight p.m., but he's been out for a while, and it's dark. He finds that he doesn't care, not with Richie's hands all over him, his mouth on Eddie's neck.

"Eds," Richie murmurs into the hollow of his throat. "I don't want to miss you anymore. It fucking sucks."

Eddie feels his eyes prickle with sudden emotion. "Yeah, I don't want to miss you anymore either, Rich."

Richie lifts his head, and his eyes are shiny. "When we go back to school, I'm gonna call you every night, and we can write letters all the time, and when we graduate I'll move to New York or you can come to California, or — or we can go somewhere else together, okay?"

Eddie nods, feeling overwhelmingly happy and also like he wants to burst into tears. "Okay."

"I love you," Richie blurts, and then looks vaguely mortified. "I

mean, sorry, I just —”

“Richie,” Eddie cuts him off. “I love you too. Did you not get that from my mixtape full of literal love songs?”

Richie laughs sheepishly. “Yeah, alright.”

“Do you remember the one you made me for my fifteenth birthday? I still listen to that one all the time.”

Richie groans, dropping his head. “Man, *why* do you keep embarrassing me right now? That was the most obvious one I ever made.”

“It was,” Eddie agrees. He kisses Richie’s forehead, the part of him that he has easiest access to at the moment. “Hey, I should — I don’t want to, but I should probably go back home. Are you good to drive?”

Richie hums. “Almost.” He cradles Eddie’s face again, kissing him one more time. They’ve been making out for half an hour by this point, but this kiss feels different. It feels like a promise. Eddie is dizzy when they part. “Okay,” Richie says, a small, private smile on his face. “Now I’m good.”

Eddie lets Richie hold his hand over the gearshift as they drive back to Eddie’s house, even though it’s not really safe. When they pull up to the curb, they both look at each other. It’s not a smart move to kiss now, in Eddie’s neighborhood where anyone could see them. Still, Eddie lifts their entwined hands and kisses Richie’s knuckles once, just quickly, before he lets go.

“Let’s go see a movie tomorrow or something,” Eddie says. “And then go see if Ben or Mike are back in town yet.”

Richie smiles. “It’s a date,” he agrees.

Eddie’s ears turn red, but he smiles back, unable to help himself. “Yeah. Okay, well, good night. See you tomorrow.”

“See ya,” Richie says. Eddie gets out of the car and waves to Richie before heading up the steps. When he’s on his front porch, he turns

around to see Richie watching him with the biggest, goofiest grin on his face. Eddie waves again, and Richie beeps the horn twice in response before he drives off. Eddie laughs, even though he knows his mother is going to bitch about the noise when he gets inside.

Stepping into the house, he doesn't feel the cloak of dread settling over him quite so much as usual. This doesn't feel like home, but maybe it never was. *Derry* was never his home, but the things that made it feel that way — his friends, *Richie* — Eddie knows now that he's bringing that with him when he finally leaves this place for good.

Author's Note:

here's the tracklist for eddie's mixtape, which you can also [listen to here](#):

1. hey jealousy by gin blossoms
2. dancing in the dark by bruce springsteen
3. all i want by joni mitchell
4. dreams by the cranberries
5. heroes by david bowie
6. there is a light that never goes out by the smiths
7. head over feet by alanis morissette
8. constant craving by k.d. lang
9. landslide by fleetwood mac
10. friday i'm in love by the cure

and [here is richie's mixtape](#) that's referenced a couple times in the fic, from eddie's 15th birthday.

hit me up on twitter [@hermannngottiieb](#) for more reddie content, and please leave a comment if u enjoyed this! xoxo